

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY W. G. Brown DATE 2/13/87

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TO MR. G. A. B. (S)

FROM MR. G. A. B. (S)

DIRECTOR X W. G. Brown

October 19, 1961

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MEMORANDUM FOR MR. CARL KATZ
THE WHITE HOUSE

THROUGH: MR. MORGAN BURN

Subject: The Interaction of Soviet and
Western Military Postures

The attached copies of memoranda, prepared by
Mr. Raymond L. Garthoff, on certain aspects of the
Soviet Military are forwarded for your information.

D. K. R. N.
L. D. Battle
Executive Secretary

S/S-RO/118
OCT 13 1961

A true copy of original

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Attachments:

1. Secret Memo of 10/9/61 re Berlin.
2. Secret Memo of 10/10/61 re Soviet Military Posture.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY
G/PM

October 12, 1961

Luke:

I would appreciate your transmitting the attached memoranda by Ray Garthoff to Carl Kaysen at the White House. The October 10 memo was, in fact, suggested by Carl in a conversation, and I know he would be interested. These memoranda have been prepared as background papers and do not make policy recommendations. They have been seen by interested Departmental officers.

J. C. K.

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October 9, 1961

MEMORANDUM

TO: G/PM - Mr. Kitchen
FROM: G/PM - Mr. Carthoff
SUBJECT: The Role of Military Demonstrations in the
Politico-Military Confrontation over Berlin

This memorandum seeks to provide a broad overview of the effect on Soviet policy of military moves and countermoves in the Berlin crisis. It is not concerned with estimating such moves in possible future contingencies, but rather with the general place of military measures in influencing Soviet policy and grand tactics in recent months and in the months ahead. It does not make specific recommendations for future policy, though hopefully it will be useful in considering future moves.

Our military measures to date have had as their principal focus persuading the Soviet leaders of our determination to protect vital interests in Berlin, including our rights of access. As a second purpose many of these moves have been designed to provide us with a basis for greater flexibility in future situations where some limited threat or use of force might be necessary. A third purpose has been to stimulate similar actions by our Allies and thus both to contribute further to the two first objectives and to display Allied unity.

One of the chief categories of military preparation has been a build-up of U.S. conventional strength, including reinforcement of American forces in Europe. This policy has been challenged on the grounds that an increase in non-nuclear strength would undermine Soviet belief in the readiness of the U.S. to use nuclear weapons. This objection, however, fails to consider that

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in the Soviet view the most likely Western alternative to use of limited non-nuclear force would in fact be no military action, rather than use of nuclear weapons, for the kind of indirect and gradual challenges with which they intend to continue to confront us. Hence, the build-up of conventional forces increases the likelihood of Western action and the assumption of the risks of war, and reduces the attractiveness of Soviet tactics which would provoke a limited Western military response. The Soviets may miscalculate the conditions under which the West would resort to use of nuclear weapons, but an increase in Western capability - and in consequence also in resolve - to meet indirect challenges would not lead the Soviets to conclude that risks could be pushed further without danger of nuclear war.

The Soviets have, in fact, shown a remarkable sensitivity to U.S. moves to bolster conventional strength (though, by the same token, the reluctance of our NATO allies to date to make more than token steps cannot but have been some comfort to them). They have countered our comparatively modest measures for augmentation of conventional forces by much bluster and by substantial measures augmenting their own comparable forces. This does not mean that other moves increasing our strategic deterrent forces are not of equal or even greater importance; in particular, it is desirable that the Soviets be given clear indications of U.S. preparation not only for non-nuclear action against threatening local situations but also against the possibilities of limited or general nuclear war.

Review of Principal Military Moves, June through September, 1961

Military moves are, of course, part of a whole complex of political developments, and in the discussion following this must be kept in mind. It does, however, seem possible and useful for analytical purposes to focus attention here on the main military developments and on their interaction and apparent influence on broad courses of policy.

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The key measure touching off the recent and continuing spiral of military moves and counter-moves was the proposal by President Kennedy on May 25, 1961, for an increase of \$3.4 billion in defense expenditures.

Six weeks elapsed before the Soviet response had been formulated sufficiently for Khrushchev to announce, on July 8, an increase in the Soviet defense budget precisely equivalent to the U.S. increase in terms of the official dollar-ruble exchange rate, and a suspension of the large-scale reduction in force begun in January 1960, which had continued at a modest rate into the Spring of 1961.

Of a lesser order of magnitude, and probably not in response to the U.S. move, preparations begun in June led to the Soviet Air Force Day display of aircraft on July 9, and the Navy Day celebrations on July 30. These annual celebrations were given unusual emphasis, and the air show in particular was used for the first time in five years to mount a display of numerous experimental and other aircraft types, many of which never will become operational. A medium bomber with supersonic "dash" performance was the most impressive item. The naval "parade" in the Neva River at Leningrad marked the first public display of missile-launching destroyers, submarines and patrol craft (though the Soviets knew that these ships were all well known to the West).

President Kennedy's address of July 25 outlined, in the course of a major restatement of Western determination on the Berlin issue, a number of major measures of military build-up additional to those mentioned in his addresses of March 28 and May 25.

These measures included another increase in defense expenditures of \$ 3 1/4 billion, and provided for addition of 225,000 men to the active armed service, plus authorization to call up 250,000 reserves at any time, and retention of certain air and naval units earlier scheduled for retirement. As the President stressed, "about half of the total sum is needed for the procurement of non-nuclear weapons, ammunition and equipment." Thus the stress was on boosting non-nuclear capability.

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though attention was also directed toward civil defense, some functions concerning which were transferred to the Department of Defense. In addition he referred to earlier steps to put 50 percent of all strategic bombers on ground alert.

Khrushchev's reaction, as given personally to McCloy on July 27, was very strong and belligerent. As in his July 8 speech, he attributed to us motives of military pressure against the Communist Bloc. In response, among other threats, he spoke of a 100 megaton super-H bomb which he said had been devised. From other reports as well, we learn that Khrushchev was especially stung by this speech.

On August 7, Khrushchev made a speech in which he stressed the horrendous consequences of a nuclear war, a speech in this respect unusual for delivery to a domestic Soviet audience. His speech paralleled, point by major point, the President's speech of July 25.

Meanwhile, a Warsaw Pact meeting was held secretly in late July and publicly in early August. On August 10, Marshal Konev was revealed to have been recalled from retirement to be the new Soviet Commander-in-Chief in East Germany. On August 17, in a classical military "demonstration," foreign military attaches in Moscow were invited to observe a military field exercise featuring employment of tactical nuclear weapons. This was the first such invitation to the U.S. and Allied attaches since the war.

Throughout August a series of individual U.S. and Western military moves were made. On August 8, the three training divisions of the U.S. Army were ordered to become combat ready, and retention of 270 B-47 bombers previously due for retirement was announced. Dispatch of modest French and British reinforcements to West Germany was announced on August 17, and on the same day the U.S. Navy disclosed plans to increase the active fleet by five percent in five months. A U.S. battle group was sent to Berlin on August 19 following the Communist closure of East Berlin on August 13. On August 16, Secretary of the Army Stahr announced in a press conference that

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soldiers due for release between October 1 and June 1, 1962, would be retained on active duty for four months, and that 23,000 reservists were being alerted for call-up. (The Navy had issued a press release on August 14 that reserve officers due for release would be retained). On August 25, over 76,000 reservists were called to active duty. On the 27th it was announced that the Marines would reach their planned strength of 190,000 by December 1. On September 9 the order to dispatch 40,000 troops to Europe, and cessation of sending dependents there, were made public.

The Soviet response to Kennedy's July 25 program and the subsequent moves toward implementation during August was a new series of major measures to "match" the U.S. program, and a new campaign to emphasize Soviet strategic nuclear and missile strength. On August 30, a formal decree retaining "temporarily" on active duty servicemen due for annual release was published. It was specifically said to be linked to the parallel U.S. actions, and in fact probably was. The next day, the USSR announced the resumption of nuclear testing. This move had evidently been under consideration for some time, with contingent preparations for testing being made. The actual decision to resume testing at that time was, however, probably made after the President's speech, in late July or early August. On September 1, the first nuclear test was made. On the same day, it was announced that maneuvers would take place in certain closed areas of the Arctic from mid-September to mid-November. On September 8-9 another Warsaw Pact meeting took place. On the 10th an announcement of ICBM firings into the Pacific between mid-September and mid-October was accompanied by a multi-megaton thermonuclear test in the Arctic. Several belittling articles by Soviet marshals were published in mid-September.

The United States did not seek to match directly these Soviet nuclear-missile demonstrations, though nuclear testing was soon resumed. The earlier program continued to unfold. In particular, on September 19 the U.S. called to active duty another 73,000 reservists including two national guard divisions, and a new unified STRAC-TAC command was established. On September 1 and 23 the temporary reinforcement of USAF by over 200 fighter aircraft was revealed.

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Allied measures to increase military strength were also announced, though there were few of significance. The French announced return of two divisions to France from Algeria, and the UK revealed plans to build a reserve division out of other existing units by retrenchment of already slimy overseas deployment. West Germany decided to hold on active duty 40,000 men due for release, and has been expected to extend the draft term to eighteen months.

Along with moves to build up forces and advance deployment, both sides publicized maneuvers. NATO exercises Check Mate (held in Central Europe September 12-15) and Check Mate II (in the Mediterranean, Greece and Turkey September 16-21) were given prominence, especially in Soviet press denunciation beginning in early September. In the course of Check Mate II a U.S. aircraft carrier and cruiser visited Istanbul, and two U.S. destroyers entered the Black Sea. On September 25, Warsaw Pact maneuvers for October and November were announced (with explicit reference to Check Mate), with unspecified scale and locale.

Uncontrolled Moves

Along with planned measures of military build-up, deployment, and demonstration are other unintended or uncontrolled activities which affect the other side's general impression. For example, the unplanned flight of two West German fighters to West Berlin on September 14 - without any challenge from East German air defenses - turned out to be a striking demonstration, and annoyed the Communists very much. It is also possible that intentional, but routine, military activities by the West may be taken by the other side as demonstrations.

The most significant uncontrolled (or at least only partly controlled) moves are press leaks of Western plans, and especially of

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Western deliberations. Leaks indicating that the President had ordered an urgent review of our military strength (New York Times, July 11), and that plans to mobilize National Guard Divisions were under consideration (July 12), may have been helpful in carrying the impression of U.S. seriousness. But other press reports indicating possible call-up of 5 or 6 divisions (July 17 and 30) and a possible increase in expenditures of \$4.3 billion (July 13) unfortunately tend to undercut and diminish the impact of actual measures later taken. Thus the call-up of 2 divisions and increase of over 3 billion dollars are probably recognized to be measures scaled-down from initial proposals. They remain, of course, significant, but their significance is somewhat lessened.

Press reportage of cutbacks also can have a deleterious effect; for example, the revelation (on August 5) that the current augmentation of the Army was being held to 185,000. The importance of the publication of cutbacks is, of course, not proportionate to the often minor actual changes. Such developments may be interpreted as indications of interest to hold back or reduce our commitment, and thus as reflection of only grudging readiness to undertake such measures at all. This, in turn may suggest a still greater reluctance to face really serious costs or risks.

Conclusion

The chief effects on the Soviets of Western military moves undertaken from June through September are probably the following:

(1) A Soviet conclusion that the U.S. intends to contest the Berlin issue vigorously, by further committing prestige and resources and permitting an increase in the level of tension (which would be self-defeating if we were later to back down). This does not, however, mean that they have concluded that the U.S. cannot be brought to backing down. Thus, in general, military demonstrations by the U.S. have probably led the Soviet leaders to raise their estimate of U.S. determination, but without making clear the point at which the West would resort to use of military means to stop political encroachments.

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(2) The U.S. build-up in conventional forces, more than taken though less than an indication of reliance on such forces, is probably seen as supporting our statements of intent to resist local actions for which a nuclear response would be unsuitable. Parallel moves to increase the alert status and size of the strategic nuclear force militate against Soviet conclusion that any decisions have been taken to stop our response short of nuclear war if resort to it were necessary.

(3) The Soviet leaders probably now believe that they themselves have been challenged by the whole of the military measures announced and taken, and that it would be an affront to their prestige to back down under military "pressure." At least an initial result has been a hardening of the Soviet position, and initiation of some Soviet military moves that would not otherwise have been taken.

(4) The Soviet measures to increase their own conventional forces have in general been in response to similar U.S. measures. The announced suspension of the 1960 reduction in force program would probably have been made in any event, largely for its psychological effect. However, other measures such as retention of servicemen due for release, while doubtless desired by the military leaders to increase the effectiveness of their forces, would probably not have been made if the U.S. had not done so. The same judgment is probably true for the future in respect to Soviet matching or over-matching of increased deployment forward in or into Europe.

(5) The readiness of the NATO Allies to follow the U.S. lead in increasing military preparedness has not been impressive to the Soviets. There have been no evident serious fissures, but the U.S. seems to be well ahead of the Alliance as a whole in seeing a need for further military strengthening. The Soviets probably consider NATO reluctance to follow the U.S. lead in military preparations as indicative more of Allied unwillingness to resort to military means, than of Allied desire to use nuclear weapons, in the kind of confrontation which they intend to pose (i.e., pressure for Western dealings with the GDR and some limitations on activities in Berlin).

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(6) The Soviets have sought to intimidate Western peoples by demonstrating nuclear and missile strength, and at the same time to influence official Western estimates of Soviet strategic striking power. Their evaluation of the effectiveness of the latter are uncertain, but they probably believe they have achieved much in respect to the former aim. The Soviets may recognize that insofar as their resumption of nuclear testing was intended, among other things, to impress the West, it has probably not succeeded. The dominant reaction in the West has tended to be that the Soviets were led to accept political costs of resumption by military needs, that is, by relative military weakness in the nuclear field.

(7) Since the Soviets intend to present the West with political challenges (e.g., not forcible denial of access to West Berlin, but demands for the political concession of dealing with the GDR to arrange terms of access), they probably believe that if a spiral of military moves and countermoves leads to greater popular reluctance to see use of force to deal with such political challenges, the Western governments may in the last analysis be less inclined to do so.

(8) From the standpoint of effect on Soviet evaluations of U.S. determination, the call-up of reservists and increase in draft calls has probably been of some consequence. Soviet officials have on occasion given indications that they are more impressed by signs of willingness of the U.S. government, and people, to undergo sacrifices of military service, than by budgetary increases which in their view are less a sacrifice than a gain by arms industries and perhaps the general economy.

(9) The Soviets are probably not pleased at the need to increase their own military effort in various ways now necessitated by U.S. measures. As noted earlier, they have felt a need to react by building their own force in ways they would otherwise not have done. Moreover, the uncertainty on long-term Western military levels adds uncertainty to their own economic plans, just as they are embarking

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